



Child Maltreatment 2004: Summary of Key Findings

This factsheet presents excerpts from *Child Maltreatment 2004*, a report based on data submissions by the States for Federal fiscal year 2004. The National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System was developed by the Children's Bureau of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in partnership with the States to collect annual statistics on child maltreatment from State child protective services (CPS) agencies.¹

The press release announcing these data is available on the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services website:

http://www.acf.hhs.gov/news/press/2006/Child_Maltreatment_2004.htm

The full *Child Maltreatment 2004* report is available on the Children's Bureau website:

<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/pubs/cm04/index.htm>

Limited print copies are available from Child Welfare Information Gateway.

¹ CPS agencies respond to referrals regarding harm to children caused by parents or primary caregivers. Incidents of harm to children caused by other people, such as acquaintances and strangers, are not included in these data.



Victims

An estimated 872,000 children were determined to be victims of child abuse or neglect in 2004. The rate of victimization per 1,000 children in the national population has dropped from 13.4 children in 1990 to 11.9 children in 2004.

More than 60 percent of child victims experienced neglect. Almost 18 percent were physically abused, 10 percent were sexually abused, and 7 percent were emotionally maltreated. In addition, 15 percent of cases were associated with "other" types of maltreatment, based on specific State laws and policies.²

Children ages birth to 3 years had the highest rates of victimization at 16.1 per 1,000 children of the same age group. Girls were slightly more likely than boys to be victims.

African-American, Pacific Islander, and American Indian or Alaska Native children had the highest rates of victimization when compared to their national population, with rates of 19.9, 17.6, and 15.5 per 1,000 children, respectively. White children and Hispanic children had rates of approximately 10.7 and 10.4 per 1,000 children, respectively. Asian children had the lowest rate of victimization at 2.9 per 1,000 children.

Reports and Investigations of Child Abuse and Neglect

In 2004, an estimated 3 million referrals concerning the welfare of approximately 5.5 million children were made to CPS agencies throughout the United States. Of these, approximately 63 percent were accepted for investigation or assessment; 37 percent were not accepted. Since 2001, the rate and number of children who received an investigation has been increasing. For 2001, the rate was 43.2 children per 100,000, resulting in an estimated 3,136,000 children who received an investigation. In 2004, the rate was 47.8, resulting in an estimated 3,503,000 children.

More than one-half (56 percent) of all reports that alleged child abuse or neglect were made by professionals such as educators, law enforcement and legal personnel, social services personnel, medical personnel, mental health personnel, child daycare providers, and foster care providers. Friends, neighbors, relatives, and other nonprofessionals submitted approximately 44 percent of reports.

² These numbers add up to more than 100 percent because some children were victims of more than one type of maltreatment.

Approximately 30 percent of the reports that were investigated included at least one child who was found to be a victim of abuse or neglect. About 60 percent of the reports were found to be unsubstantiated (including those that were intentionally false); the remaining reports were closed for additional reasons.

Fatalities

Child fatalities are the most tragic consequence of maltreatment. For 2004, an estimated 1,490 children died due to abuse or neglect. More than 80 percent of children who were killed were younger than 4 years old; 12 percent were 4 to 7 years old; 4 percent were 8 to 11 years old; and 3 percent were 12 to 17 years old.

Infant boys (younger than 1 year) had the highest rate of fatalities, with nearly 18 deaths per 100,000 boys of the same age in the national population. Infant girls (younger than 1 year) had a rate of 17 deaths per 100,000. The overall rate of child fatalities was 2 deaths per 100,000 children. More than one-third of child fatalities were attributed to neglect. Physical abuse also was a major contributor to fatalities.

Perpetrators

Approximately 79 percent of perpetrators were parents. Other relatives accounted for 7 percent, and unmarried partners of parents accounted for 4 percent of perpetrators. The remaining perpetrators included persons with other (camp counselor, school employee, etc.) or unknown relationships to the child victims.

Female perpetrators, who were mostly mothers, were typically younger than male perpetrators, who were mostly fathers. Women also comprised a larger percentage of all perpetrators than men: 58 percent compared to 42 percent.

Of all parents who were perpetrators, fewer than 3 percent were associated with sexual abuse, while 63 percent committed neglect. Nearly three-quarters of perpetrators who were friends or neighbors committed sexual abuse.

Services

Approximately 59 percent of victims and 27 percent of nonvictims received services as a result of an investigation or assessment. Children with a disability were 70 percent more likely to receive services than other victims. Victims of multiple maltreatments were 65 percent more likely to receive services than children who were victims of physical abuse. In contrast, child victims of an unknown race or ethnicity were 66 percent less likely to receive services than White victims, and children who were maltreated by someone other than their parents were 60 percent less likely to receive services than children maltreated by their mothers.

Services included both in-home and foster care services. Approximately 19 percent of child victims were placed in foster care. About 4 percent of nonvictims also experienced a removal—usually a short-term placement during the course of the investigation. When compared with White child victims, victims of “other” or multiple races were 56 percent more likely to be placed in foster care.